

Now, Mr. Speaker, we hear opponents on the other side say "You are offending the American people. They do not buy what you are doing. It is wrong." That may be the case. But let me just remind them of one plain and simple fact: Since Bill Clinton took office 3 years ago, there have now been as of today 182 publicly elected officials switch parties in this country; 182, Mr. Speaker. All 182 who switched parties, from Maine to Washington State, to the southern States, were Democrats who switched to the Republican Party. All 182 publicly elected officials, including 7 Members of the U.S. Congress, have now distanced themselves from this President.

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So my colleagues on the other side may be right. Maybe the President has it all right and in the end this game of smoke and mirrors and images and perceptions will win. I think not. I think the American people are smarter than that, and these 182 elected officials who have switched parties and joined the Republican Party agree with us that this President must finally do what he said that he wants to do, and that is give us a detailed plan. If he does that, I will join with the Philadelphia Enquirer tomorrow, or tonight, and I will vote for a CR to get the Federal employees back to work, but I want to see the President's detailed plan.

Where is it and when will we see it? Now is the time, Mr. President. Provide us your detailed plan for balancing the Federal budget.

PRIVATE BUSINESSES WOULD NOT SHUT DOWN THE WAY GOVERNMENT HAS SHUT DOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. BARRETT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, last year there was a popular film in our country called "Dumb and Dumber." I often wondered why they did not call it "Dumb and Dumbest." Ah, because that would convey the message a little bit better. But now I understand the reason, unfortunately, is the dumbest idea has been reserved for action taken by this Congress.

I have been in public life 12 years, and I am sad to say that this furlough is the dumbest thing I have seen government do in my 12 years in business. I have come down to this well several times to talk about the furlough, which is, in effect, paying people either to stay home or telling them that they have to work and they are not going to get paid.

I have basically issued a challenge, a little contest, if you will, because I am still looking for one business, one business in this entire country that twice in the same year would get so mad at itself that it would tell its workers go home, stay at home, and I am going to pay you. I have not got a call from a

single business in this country that would do that.

I was on a talk radio show last week in my district, and I did have a caller who called in and said, "Well, I love what Speaker GINGRICH is doing and I support what he is doing." I said, "Well, let me ask you this, then. Would you, if you were using your own money, send your employees home, tell them to stay at home and that you were going to pay them?" And he hemmed and hawed a little and said, "No, I would not." I said, "Well, I find it interesting that we now have the leadership in Congress who has come here and said we are going to run Congress like a business when there is not a single business in this country that would run itself the way Congress is running itself right now." It does not make any sense at all.

Now, what should we be doing today? We are in special orders now, and the reason we are in special orders is because the Speaker and the majority will not let us even vote on a measure to get these people back to work. The Senate has passed it unanimously. The majority leader in the Senate was quoted as saying, "Enough is enough." And enough is enough. These are people who want to work, who should be working, and who should be getting paid.

Now, I hear Members from the other side come down into the well and talk about sacrifice and that there is a greater mission here and a greater good. Those are not people who talk to the people I talk to in my district, because I fielded as many calls as I could from employees.

I talked to a woman who works for the FBI in Milwaukee who commutes 100 miles a day, who has two foster children, who is living from paycheck to paycheck.

I talked to a woman who works in the U.S. attorney's office, who is being forced to work and is not being paid. There are people in our neighborhood, the husband works for the VA hospital, two small children, his wife is at home. He is required to work and is not being paid.

This morning I talked to a guard at the Oxford Federal Prison in Wisconsin. Three hundred employees are being required to work but are not being paid. I said, "Well, what type of people do you have at the Oxford Prison?" He said, "We have a lot of drug offenders. Most of the people here have violent pasts." We are asking Federal guards to guard people who have been convicted of murder and selling drugs, and we are asking them to work without pay.

Mr. Speaker, that is unconscionable. That should not happen in the United States. That should not happen in England. That should not happen in any country in this world.

Again, we hear the speakers on the other side talk about sacrifice. The gentleman from Florida earlier talked about how moved he was that he talked

to an older gentleman, a senior citizen on Meals on Wheels, and that gentleman said, the senior citizen purportedly said that he was willing to give up a meal in order to get a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to ask any citizen in this country to give up a meal so that we can pass a bill that has tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthiest people in this country. It is wrong and we should not be doing it.

Mr. Speaker, again, the Members on the other side talk about sacrifice, and it is necessary for these employees to sacrifice. Again, I was in my district talking to employees and they asked the obvious question. "What about you, Mr. Congressman? Why are you not sacrificing?" And to be honest, my initial response to them was, I have got a wife and I have got two children to support. And they jeered. They said so do we.

I had to go home and think about that. I had to go home and think about it, even though I voted every time to get these people back to work. I had to think about the fact that they are in the same situation as I am. I have a 1- and 3-year-old at home and a wife at home. I do not want to give up my pay.

But, Mr. Speaker, I decided today that I should do what many of my colleagues have done and that is to say that I will put myself in the same position as the other Federal employees. If we are asking them to sacrifice, well, then we should sacrifice, too. And I ask my colleagues to do the same thing, and that will end this misery.

IMPASSE ON FEDERAL BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ARE SEPARATE ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. NADLER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, we face today two separate controversies, two separate controversies that have been combined and confused, deliberately and improperly combined and confused.

The first controversy is the impasse on the Federal budget. This impasse involves real and serious issues. The Republicans want to balance the budget and they want to make huge cuts in Medicare and in Medicaid in order to pay for a very large tax cut benefiting mostly the wealthiest Americans. Democrats, for the most part, want to balance the budget, but they want to do it while protecting Medicare and Medicaid, college loans, education, and the environment.

These are serious differences and serious issues, and their outcome will determine the fundamental direction the country will take over the next few years, and these controversies deserve real and perhaps lengthy and extended debate. But this controversy should not lead to a shutdown of the Federal Government.